

THE
AUTHORITY and SANCTIFICATION
OF THE
L O R D ' s - D A Y,
Explained and Enforced,
IN A
CIRCULAR LETTER
FROM THE

BAPTIST MINISTERS and MESSENGERS,

Assembled at NORTHAMPTON, *June 6, 7, and 8, 1786:*

Maintaining the important Doctrines of Three equal Persons in the Godhead; eternal and personal Election; original Sin; particular Redemption; free Justification by the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness; efficacious Grace in Regeneration; the final Perseverance of the Saints, and the Independency or Congregational Order of the Churches of Christ inviolably.

To the several Churches they represent, or have received Letters from, meeting at Codnor, Sutton - Ashfield, Nottingham, Sheephead, Leicester, Sutton-in-the-Elms, Arnsby, Foxton, Clipston, Oakham, Spalding, Soham, Kettering, Walgrave, Guilsborough, Northampton, Road, Olney, and St. Alban's; also many other Churches, not yet in the Association, who, notwithstanding, countenance it by the Attendance of their Ministers, and many of their Members.

Dear Brethren!

THROUGH the goodness of God, we met together at the time and place appointed; and have the felicity of being able to add, that we met in love, received pleasure and profit from our interview, and parted in peace. A moderator being chosen, one of the brethren introduced the association with prayer. The letters from the churches were then read. The contents, as usual, were various; but, on the whole, were judged to be more encouraging, than for several years back. Some indeed brought complaints of deadness in the church, and want of conversion in the congregation. May the Lord revive and build up those parts of Zion! Others contained intelligence of a more pleasing kind; a measure of prosperity being evidently enjoyed in several places. May the Lord make thankful, and keep humble! The monthly meetings of prayer, for the general spread of the gospel, appear to be kept up with some degree of spirit.* This, we hope, will yet be the case. Brethren,

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* For an account of them, see our letter for the year 1784. And brother Fuller's sermon, entitled, "The Nature and Importance of walking by Faith." Sold by Buckland, London, price 6d.

be not weary in well-doing, for in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not. We learn that many other churches, in different, and some in distant parts of the land, and some of different denominations, have voluntarily acceded to the plan. We communicate the above information, for your encouragement. Once more we would invite all who love truth and holiness, into whose hands our letter may fall, to unite their help. Let societies, let families, let individuals, who are friends to the cause of Christ, unite with us, not only daily, but in a particular manner, at the appointed season. § With pleasure we were informed of an open door in many places, for the preaching of the gospel. We request it of our friends, that they would encourage the occasional ministry of the word in their respective villages and neighbourhoods, where they may be situated, to the utmost of their power. Be not backward to appear on God's side. Any applications of this kind, we mean to comply with, as far as we can.

We have for a number of years addressed you, dear brethren, on various important branches of christianity. Our letters have been the fruit of sincere affection, and unfeigned concern for your spiritual welfare. Surely we may hope, that what we have said, is not forgotten. We entreat you to review our annual epistles. We trust, we may say, that our concern for the prosperity of your souls, has animated us to some degrees of serious prayer and close study, in drawing them up for your use. We say not this by way of self commendation: no, but under a deep sense of the excellence of the truths they contain, and the importance of your paying a proper attention to those doctrines they are designed to explain.

The natural, but serious question having been proposed, "What shall be the subject of our next annual letter?"—We said one to another, "What will be most suitable? What is most necessary? What can we think of, that will be most for general advantage?"—We paused. We thought?—We freely spoke our sentiments.—At length we determined. The subject on which we have fixed, is that of the *sabbath*. We attend to it the more cheerfully, because we know you will approve of our choice. You love that sacred day; it is dear to your very souls.

Before we enter upon the subject, let us explain the term. When you meet with the word *sabbath*, in your English bibles, you may observe, that it is a hebrew term, left untranslated. † It literally signifies in our language, *rest*. Thus, when it is said of the creator of all things, in Gen. ii. 2. "he *rested* on the seventh day;" and again, ver. 3. "he *rested* from all his work," it is the same word which is rendered *sabbath* throughout the bible. Had it been left untranslated in these passages, as it often is, it would have read, "*he sabbatized*," or "*kept a sabbath*;" i. e. he ceased, or desisted, or rested on the seventh day from the work of creation, in which he had been employed the preceding six.

The first idea of a *sabbath* seems then to be, "a laying aside of our usual business." Agreeably to this, we find it expressly enjoined in the fourth commandment, "in it thou shalt do no manner of work." But are we to stop here? Are we to consider it merely as a day of inactivity and indolence? If so, the most slothful would bid fair to keep it best.—No;—let us not so disparage this sacred day. The interruption of our worldly business, is in order that we may have leisure for, attention to, and activity in, what is proper to the day.

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§ One hour, the first Monday evening, in every calender month.

† In like manner as in the New Testament the words baptize and baptism are retained from the greek.

The *sabbath* then we consider, as *that day which is divinely set apart, for religious ends and purposes*. The truth of our assertion we mean first to prove. That being done, we intend to explain and enforce the article of *practice*, which will result from it.

That there is a God, is one of the first principles of natural and revealed religion. That he is the greatest and best of beings, is the next. That he ought to be worshipped, follows of course. If he is to be worshipped, time must be allotted for the work. The advantages that attend our having some fixed season for that purpose, are self-evident. The only question then is, "what *portion* of time." Have we any rule or directory from heaven on this head? Might we not naturally expect one? Shall the appointment be left to human direction, and so be determined according to our inclination? This would be to make man a *legislator* in what relates to the service of God. No authority can, with any propriety, be acknowledged, in fixing or appointing the precise time, but that of Jehovah. And has he any where done it? Let us enquire. We will turn to the *moral law*. In the fourth commandment, we find it fixed. That sacred precept demands a *seventh part*, or *one day in seven*. And God sets before us his own example to enforce the command. "FOR in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and RESTED THE SEVENTH DAY." Here God's resting, is given as the reason why we should rest: and his resting on the *seventh* day is held up for our imitation, as the reason why we must rest on *that* day too. The divine conduct is represented as a pattern for us to follow. Certainly this reason applies now with force quite equal to what it ever did. There is nothing in it either temporary or local. Thus, an observance of the *sabbath*, is an *imitation* of an *example* of the highest dignity, and an act of obedience to a *precept* of the greatest authority.

Even though we should allow this precept to be in a sense a *positive* one, yet its *necessity* is plain and self-evident. Without it, our obligations to worship God, which are most clearly *moral*, could not be fulfilled. Proper acts of worship cannot be performed, unless proper portions of time are allotted for the work. And as not only personal, but social acts of religious worship, appear to be *moral* duties, there must of necessity be a *fixed* time, in order to our attendance thereon. Hence it evidently seems most fit and agreeable, that a *particular day* should be appointed, especially for the purpose of social religion. But after these remarks are seriously weighed, we would leave it to every conscientious mind to determine for himself, whether we can with more propriety call the fourth commandment a *positive* or a *moral* precept.

The conclusion of this precept informs us, that Jehovah *blessed and hallowed* the *sabbath-day*, which mode of expression, naturally recalls to our remembrance, a similar form of speech made use of in Gen. ii. 3. What can we imagine is intended by God's *blessing and hallowing or sanctifying* a day? When he is said to *bless* a *person*, we frequently understand by it, the bestowment of some good. But, in what sense can he be said to *bless* a *day*? What peculiar *good* can he confer on it? We answer, he hath *honoured and dignified* it in an eminent way and manner. Or, in the language of scripture, he hath *hallowed, or sanctified* it. May not this *latter* form of speech be understood as explanative of the *former*? Is it any unnatural force on the text to say, that his *blessing* of the day, consists in his *hallowing or sanctifying* it? Admitting this to be the case, in what sense can God be said to *sanctify* a *day*? It cannot be by the

infusion of holiness into it. A period of time is not capable of being *sanctified* in this view: but only rational creatures, as men or angels. It must therefore be *by a setting it apart to an holy purpose*; it is *sanctified*, as *separated* from a common, and *dedicated* to an holy use or end, as the tabernacle or temple was *sanctified* of old. It is a day set apart for man to keep holy unto God.

Behold the dignity of the *sabbath*! How honourable in its origin! Let us look back to the garden of Eden. There we find this sacred day. Take a view of our first parents in a state of innocence. They began their lives, by keeping it holy to God. They gave the first fruits of their time, to their creator. Nor can any rob us of this blessed day, without first scaling the walls of paradise, and plundering that happy ground. Let such stand and tremble at the sight of the flaming sword, that turns every way to guard the holy commandment.

In addition to what has been said, it may not be amiss to enquire what traces we can find of the prevalence of such a practice among the people of God, in the different ages of the world. As to the patriarchs, we are not expressly informed how they acted.* The very concise manner, in which Moses, as an historian, runs through the first periods of time, sufficiently accounts for his silence on many heads. Yet a strong probability arises on the affirmative side of the question, from their distinguishing time by weeks of seven days. See Gen. viii. 10--12. xxix. 27. Is it not difficult to account for the prevalence of such a practice, on any other supposition, than that of some such divine appointment, as the above mentioned? Nor is it at all improbable, that the day, in the time of Job, when the "sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord," Job i. 6. was the *sabbath*, when those who feared the Lord, assembled for acts of social worship. Express mention is made of it in the 16th chapter of Exodus, *prior* to the giving of the law on mount Sinai. Here we may observe, that the manner in which Moses speaks of it, does not look like the delivering out of a new command, but rather, as referring to an institution already well known. Hence, he does not give them any general directions, relative to the day at large, but only how they should act with regard to the *manna*. As it was not to fall on the *sabbath*, they were to gather a double quantity the preceding day. Thus, to give them information what to expect, and direction how to act, in a new, and very singular circumstance, seem to be the very reasons, why the *sabbath* is at all mentioned.

To pass unnoticed a variety of passages wherein the *sabbath* is mentioned under the *Jewish dispensation*, let us remark, that the observance of it in *gospel* times was *foretold* in prophecy, even during that period. Thus Isaiah, describing the state of things under the *New Testament*, when speaking of the abolition of the ceremonial law, and foretelling the calling of Gentile nations, particularly insists on the respect that shall then be paid to the *sabbath*, and ranks the observation of it among *moral precepts*; Isai. lvi. 1--8. The persons immediately spoken of, are eunuchs and
strangers.

* But, (as Dr. Watts has observed) suppose the bible was entirely silent on this subject; yet it may be justly remarked here, that as there is an *express institution* of a *sabbath* in the beginning of the bible, without any plain and uncontested example of the practice in the patriarchal ages; so in the first *christian* age, there are several plain examples of the practice of keeping the Lord's day, without any *express institution* of it in the New Testament. But as from such *christian examples*, we reasonably infer AN INSTITUTION; so from the *ancient institution*, we as reasonably infer, that there were some PATRIARCHAL EXAMPLES of the practice. Dr. Watts, on the holiness of times, &c. See his works, vol. II. page 399.

strangers. These were forbid the privileges of God's house, by the ceremonial law, in Deut. xxiii. 1--3. Now while their freedom from its restrictions is pointed out, their obligation to keep the *sabbath*, is insisted on as a matter of great importance.

To come down to the *New Testament* itself. Here we find Jesus explaining and settling the laws respecting the manner in which it shall be observed. See Matt. xii. 1--13. Can we suppose he would have done this, if it was not to remain as a standing duty in the churches? That a day was observed as a *sabbath*, by the apostles, and the first christian churches, is plain from the inspired historic page, and the most authentic accounts of the following ages. Nay, in all succeeding periods of time, down to the present, in all parts, almost all that have borne the christian name, have united in this practice, however various their opinions may have been on many other subjects. And one thing, all who are conversant with the pages of ecclesiastical history must allow, that when, either in general or particular instances, any eminent measures of the life and power of religion have been discovered, a proportionable regard for the *sanctification of the Lord's day*, has been manifested.

Some very important questions, brethren, relative to the subject in hand, must either be entirely passed by, or very slightly touched. The former will be the case with regard to several. One however, respecting the *change* of the day, we wish not quite to omit. True, a difference in opinion upon this head, between us, and some of our christian friends, we think a matter of very small importance, compared with a *denial* of our obligations to observe a *sabbath* at all. Though we own that an uniformity in judgment upon the former head, would be exceedingly agreeable; yet, we can readily embrace such as differ from us in this particular, in the arms of christian affection; but as to the latter, while we pity their persons, we would reprobate their sentiments with the warmest abhorrence. Sentiments like these are pregnant with mischief. We should consider their prevalence as dreadfully injurious to the interests of religion, and awfully pernicious to the welfare of our country. Love to the good of society, but especially love to the souls of men, would constrain us to oppose them with all our might.

Respecting the change of the sabbath from the *seventh* day to the *first*, we would here introduce an extract from a late pious and judicious divine. He justly remarks concerning the first day of the week, which we now observe as the christian sabbath, that "The fourth commandment affords no objection against this being the day that should be the *sabbath*. It says, *Six days thou shalt labour, and the seventh thou shalt rest*; which implies no more, than that after six days labour, we shall, upon the next to the sixth, rest and keep it holy. And so, to be sure, we are obliged to do for ever. But the words no way determine where those six days shall begin, and so, where the *rest* or *sabbath* shall fall. There is no direction in the fourth commandment, how to reckon the time, i. e. where to begin and end it. That is not here meddled with, but is supposed to be determined by another precept. It supposes a particular day appointed, but does not appoint any. It requires us to keep holy a seventh day, one after every six days, which particular day, God either had, or should appoint. The *christian sabbath*, in the sense of the fourth command, is as much the seventh day, as the *jewish sabbath*; because it is kept every seventh day, as much as that; it is kept after six days labour, as well as that; it is the seventh, reckoning from the

“ beginning of our first working day, as well as that was the seventh, “ from the beginning of their first working day.—Neither does any just “ objection arise from these words following, i. e. *For in six days the “ Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested “ the seventh-day; wherefore the Lord blessed the SABBATH-DAY, and “ hallowed it.* These words are not made insignificant to christians, by “ the institution of the *christian sabbath*. They still remain in their full “ force, as to that which is principally intended by them. They were “ designed to give us a reason why we are to work but six days at a time, “ and then rest on the seventh, because God hath set us the example. “ And taken so, they remain still in as much force as ever they were. “ This is the reason still, as much as ever it was, why we may work but “ six days at a time. What is the reason, that christians rest every seventh, “ and not every eighth, or ninth, or tenth day? It is because God “ worked six days, and rested the seventh.”*

As God, in the character of *Creator*, ordained a day to be kept in honour of his resting from his work, so it seems but natural, that when he appears in the character of *Redeemer*, and rests from an infinitely greater work, than that of creation, a day should be kept in honour of that glorious event. Yet it would be arrogating an improper power to ourselves, to appoint one, without some evidences of a divine warrant. Now we may observe, that Christ in a peculiar manner *honoured* the first day of the week; or, as it is commonly, and very properly called, the *LORD'S-DAY*. On it, he rose from the grave, in triumph over the powers of death and hell, bringing life and immortality to light. On the first day, he appeared to his disciples, and spoke peace to their troubled minds. John xx. 19. Thus, as on this day, he entered into rest himself, so he introduced his distressed disciples into it also. We have full evidence, that it was the *practice* of the apostles to assemble in a social manner, on this day, and that in order to attend to such services and acts, as, though not unlawful on any other day, are yet peculiarly proper for the *sabbath*. John xx. 19. xx. 7. 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.† Also, we may just observe, that the apostles were to teach their followers, to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded them. Matt. xxviii. 20. And in order that they might be fully instructed how to act, Jesus spent 40 days with them; “ speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” Acts. i. 3. Now, though we have no direct *precept* for the *change* of the day, left on record, any more than for infant baptism, yet had we as fair a *precedent* for the latter, as we have for the former, we should, without any hesitation; directly attend to the practice. That the apostles observed the first day of the week as a *sabbath*, is plain, we think, to a demonstration. It is fact, that then there arose such a custom in the churches. Had we no proof from the New Testament, of its being apostolical, we should reject it. But having satisfactory evidence on this head, we embrace it.

And

* See Jonathan Edwards's sermons on the *Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath*,—in a volume of 15 sermons, printed at Hartford, in Connecticut. 1780.

† “ When Paul went into the *jewish* synagogues on their *sabbath*, it was not, as I apprehend, from a sense of obligation to observe that day, but from a zealous disposition to take the opportunity of full assemblies, as he sometimes did of the great concourse of people at the *passover* and *pentecost*, to preach to jews and profelytes. “ But I cannot find one instance in all the New Testament, of the apostles ever calling any one *christian* church together, or of their ever meeting as such, on the seventh day; and though *judaizing* christians, and, perhaps, some others, in tenderness to them, might observe both days for some time; yet *gentile* churches constantly kept “ to the *first* day of the week, as appears from 1 Cor. xvi. 2.” See Dr. Guyse's *Paraphrase* on Acts xx. 6. Marginal Note.

And as a *change* of the day to be kept holy unto the Lord, evidently took place, so it seems to have assumed a *new name*, i. e. that of the LORD'S-DAY. Thus the *christian sabbath* may be called by way of eminence, as the instituted memorial of his death is called the LORD'S-SUPPER. 1 Cor. xi. 20. Let this day be sacred, through all the tabernacles of zion, to the *honour* of him, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the appointed heir of all things; the saviour of the church, and the governor of the universe; the king of saints, and the final judge of all intelligent agents!

Dismissing these enquiries, we now proceed, brethren, to point out the *manner* in which it should be observed. Our directions are recorded in the divine page. He, whose institution alone it is, has a right to prescribe how it shall be kept. Remember to keep it holy. In it no manner of work is to be done. It is a day that is blessed and hallowed by the great God.

On this day, you will carefully *abstain* from whatever is *unlawful*. Study, in an attentive manner, the nature of the divine command. As you wish to act with christian integrity, impartially examine the rule of your duty. What may be lawful, what may be duty on another day, may be, and in numerous instances is, absolutely sinful on this. Make conscience of your conduct. Let no part of the sabbath be appropriated to worldly business, the settling of your accounts, unprofitable visits, and journeys of pleasure, or for the prosecution of secular schemes. True, works of *necessity* and *mercy* are allowed; but we should be very serious and cautious, even in determining what may be so. A strong inclination of mind to any work, that may promise considerable profit or advantage, is in danger of influencing the judgment, to call it a *necessary* one.

And while you carefully abstain from that which is evil, you will conscientiously *follow* after what is *good*. Why are you to lay aside your worldly employ? One chief reason is, that you may be at leisure to serve God. Are not religious exercises, the proper business of the day? These are of various kinds; some private, and some public.

But let us consider the subject a little more closely. Remember, brethren, that you ought to keep the day *completely*, i. e. keep the whole of it. We are much afraid, that here, many are awfully defective. You should *begin* the day as *early* as you do any other in an ordinary way. Beware of spending more of that precious morning in your beds, than you do in common the rest of the week. Let not the readiness with which you arise to attend the concerns of the world through the week, exceed the alacrity with which you leave your beds on the *sabbath* morning, to discharge the sacred duties of that holy day. Be not in a hurry to close the day. Sacred hours are precious. Rob not God, or your own souls, of holy time. Make the day that is devoted to the service of God, as long, as in an ordinary way, you make the days allotted you to pursue the world. If love to the world has the predominance over your heart, your religion is vain. But, brethren, we hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

Are not the *duties* of the day sufficiently numerous and important, to engage the *whole* of it? Let us divide them into three classes. Some belong to the house of God; some to the family; and some to the closet. Let us begin with the closet. Here you should enter upon, and end the day. Here is abundance of very serious employ. You have the scriptures to read; the exercises of prayer and praise, of meditation and self-examination

mination to attend upon. Let us proceed to the family. Some of you are heads, in those little societies. Remember, that you have their souls as well as their bodies, under your care. You should read the word of God to them. They need your instruction. As you ought to pray with them daily, so on the *sabbath* especially. You are to be, as it were, priest and king in your family. Add the duties of the house of God. You will not forsake the assembling of yourselves together. In your public social worship, you openly own God, while you wait for, and sometimes happily find him owning of you. This is a grand end of the institution. Certainly there is full employ, for the whole of the day. You may observe the men of the world all alive in their pursuits. Surely you have *superior* motives to activity. Study then to excel them in diligence and activity.

You will at once recollect, brethren, that the *sabbath* is to be kept in a *spiritual manner*, or, in other words, that the services to be performed are *spiritual*. To perform a service in a *spiritual manner*, is to perform it with the *heart*, and that in a *right temper and frame*. The least attention to the divine command, must at once shew, that not only *outward acts*, but *inward dispositions* are required. For full and decisive proof of this, we need only to refer you to the manner in which Christ explains several parts of the moral law, in the 5th chapter of Matthew; or to his language, when he collects the sum of it, into two general precepts, in Matt. xxii. 37--39. You remember the language of Jesus, John iv. 24. "God is a *spirit*, and they that worship him, must worship in *spirit* and truth." Our obligation to worship God in *spirit*, or in a *spiritual manner*, arises from the *spirituality* of his nature. Was God a corporeal being, mere bodily acts might serve; but seeing he is a *spirit*, his worship must be agreeable to his nature. Not that bodily worship is to be discarded: Jesus Christ worshipped his divine Father with his body as well as soul. But, with this, never rest satisfied. God demands the whole man, but looks principally at the heart. Consider this as the mark by which you are to distinguish between sincerity and hypocrisy in religious acts. "As an holy priesthood, offer up *spiritual sacrifices*," 1 Pet. ii. 5. Be earnest with God for the gift of his HOLY SPIRIT, in an abundant measure. Seek his divine influences, to furnish you with *spiritual* ability, in order that you may be found in the discharge of that which is your indispensable duty. Highly prize his sacred operations. These are the real excellency of all religious duties. Brilliant parts and abilities, natural or acquired, can never supply their place.

If the *sabbath* is thus to be kept in a *spiritual manner*, or with a *right temper and frame* of mind, let us a little shew wherein it consists. When you consider the authority of the institution, certainly it calls for *reverence* and holy awe; while an attention to the kindness and condescension it discovers, demands the warmest *gratitude*. If you review the nature of your employ, employ a kin to that of heaven, employ in which you hope eternally to be engaged, surely *cheerfulness* becomes you. When you reflect upon the infinite distance, not only natural but moral, at which you stand from the great object of your worship, you ought to be clothed with *humility*; and seeing you have to do with a God that searches the hearts, and trieth the reins, it should be with *sincerity*.—Look well to the *ends* you have in view. Your first aim should be that God may be glorified. Next to this, you ought to eye your own edification. Here examine closely, lest you be mistaken. Your danger is great, because the heart

heart is very deceitful. If your *ends* are carnal, your duties cannot be spiritual. Finally, remember the only way in which your worship can be *accepted*. It is through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. ii. 5. Since the fall, there is no friendly intercourse with God, but through a mediator. In this way, divine majesty is discovered, and rich mercy displayed.

Seeing, brethren, the service of the day is of a *spiritual* nature, you ought to watch against whatever may have a tendency to *carnalize* the mind. Some attention to your very food may not be improper. Guard against an excessive indulgence of your appetites, especially on the Lord's-day. Some people have a custom of getting the best dinner they have in all the week on the sabbath, on which account it is too frequent for one of the family to be detained from divine service in the morning to prepare it; while it may be all are rendered less fit for public worship in the afternoon, as a full stomach, especially if the food is rich, naturally tends to promote drowsiness, listlessness, and inattention.—Array yourselves in a clean and decent manner, but beware of that apparel which consumes a large portion of time in putting it on. When so much time is spent at the *looking-glass*, there is but little remains for your *bible*, and your *knees*.—Attend public worship regularly and seriously. Be present at the beginning of the service. Rob not yourself of the first part of the opportunity, nor disturb the devotion of others, by being too late.—While there, watch against drowsiness. Remember, that while you are asleep, your *pew* is just as good a worshipper as you are, though not so offensive either to God or man. Forget not, that one end of worship is, to have *intercourse with God*. Solemn thought!—When worship is over, depart with a becoming gravity. How disgraceful to see a congregation all in a hurry, as if they were striving to *see*, who could quit the place first! Such persons seem as if they thought, that they had been in a prison, and are so pleased to see the doors opened, that they are ready to leap out for joy.—On your way home, act in character. Recollect where you have been, and the solemn account you have to give. Examine what advantage you have received, and enquire what you can do for God and his cause, more than you have ever yet done. Ask your conscience, what you have to be thankful for, and of what to be ashamed.—Shun the various avocations and amusements by which sacred time is often wasted.—Walking in the fields for mere recreation, or standing at your door to see every body that passes by, are practices that must pain the mind on serious reflection.—When the topics of your conversation are, news from abroad, or the situation of the nation at home; the state of the markets around, or the common affairs in life, your conduct is a direct breach of the *sabbath*. On it, you are required, not to find your own pleasure, or speak your own words, but to call it a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable, spending it in honouring him. Isa. lviii. 13.

Thus, dear brethren, we have given you another proof of our real affectionate concern for your truest welfare. You will cheerfully permit us, before we close, a little to *enforce* the matter. Consider the *authority* of the command. It is not of men, but of God. The first institution of a *sabbath* was in paradise. It was afterwards delivered to Moses on the mount, with all the awful solemnity imaginable.—Weigh the *example* of Jehovah. He rested on the seventh day. He proposes his conduct to you for your imitation. He assigns this as a reason why you should keep a *sabbath*. What dignity is there in the pattern!—Review the *design* of the

the day. It commemorates the greatest of events. The creation of the universe is wonderful, but the redemption of the church is infinitely more astonishing. How glorious the rest of our redeemer! And does not this day shadow forth the spiritual rest enjoyed by every believer in Jesus! Does it not stand as a type of that blessed rest, that remains for the people of God?—Think of the *employ*. Is it not the noblest in its nature? Here is honour. 'Tis the employ of heaven, begun on earth.—Recollect the *benefit* you have enjoyed. Have not you reason to be thankful for the sabbath? Have not some of the sweetest seasons you ever enjoyed, been on this happy day? Pleasant were the hours when you retired from the world, and enjoyed your God. You then said, “a day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.” When at a distance, you longed for its arrival. When it drew nigh, you welcomed its approach. You spent the sacred hours with sweet delight. You thought a seat at the feet of Jesus, a happy place. You met his saints; and pleasure ran through your souls; joy smiled in your countenances. You envied not a monarch on his throne.—But the day closed. You mourned its departure. You were ready to exclaim, “O for an eternal *sabbath*!” Sometimes you have been confined from the gates of Zion, by the hand of providence. Was not this circumstance thought the bitterest ingredient in your cup? You were ready to cry out, “When shall I come and appear before God?” And when you enjoyed the prospect of enlargement, you broke out, and said, “Now shall I go unto the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy.” And do you not still need *sabbaths*? Can you live without them now? No, say you, “This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

We might farther add, the awful consequences that often attend a breach of the *sabbath*.* Sin is of an hardening nature in general; but this seems to be peculiarly so. That course of wickedness which brings many to an ignominious and untimely end, often begins with this sin; witness the dying confessions of multitudes of malefactors at the fatal tree. God has, in various ages of the world, executed singular judgments upon the breakers of the fourth commandment. And what sorer, or more awful punishment, than to be given up to vice? Is not this a special token of divine anger? A little attention to surrounding facts, will soon convince us, that this is in a peculiar manner the case, with regard to *sabbath*-breakers.—Nay, he threatens heavy judgments, even upon his own people, when they do not *hallow* his *sabbaths*. Jer. xvii. 27. May not a want of a proper regard to the *sanctification of the Lord's-day*, while it is an *evidence* of the low estate of religion with many, be considered as a *cause* why God stands at a *distance* from them, as to his reviving presence? Sin is of a provoking nature. It grieves the Holy Spirit. It interrupts communion with God. Why do many complain of uncomfortable *sabbaths*, barren opportunities in the house of God, or great darkness of mind in their general

* It may be hoped, that the prevailing practice of establishing schools upon the Lord's-day, may be attended with the most beneficial effects. Love to our country, but especially love to religion, should rouse in our bosoms a warm concern for the welfare of the rising age. The proper education of youth, is a matter of the highest importance. The manner in which the *sabbath-day* is spent by multitudes, has the most pernicious effect upon their minds and morals. On it a greater progress is commonly made in vice, than upon the other six. According to the present laudable plan, many are in a great measure preserved from what would be hurtful; and, by being taught to read, and regularly brought to the public worship of God, are in the way to learn that, which, through a divine blessing, may be profitable to themselves, and render them more useful members of society at large.

general walk? Is there not a cause? If the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, what has occasioned his departure? May not this be one reason?

Let us here insert a word of admonition to some who appear defective in this duty, and yet, we hope, are not past feeling. True, this sin is of an hardening nature. But, reflect, if capable of reflection, for a moment. Though the work is painful, it is very necessary. Are you seeking your own *pleasure* on this day, by indulging yourselves in idle walks, unnecessary journeys, or formal visits? Do you never think of the danger of God's *displeasure*? Do you value the former so highly, that you will deliberately run the risk of the latter?—Or, are you attending to your own *work* upon it. Can you ask the blessing of heaven upon what you do. Do you make it a point to acknowledge God in all your ways? Can you boldly pray to him to smile upon your *sabbath day* business? Are you never afraid, that the profits of your trade, or calling in life, thus followed, should be as a moth or rust in your substance, and eat it all up? Do you never fear, lest God should curse you through all the rest of the week, because you thus rob him, upon his own day? O consider your ways!

But to return to our christian brethren, whom in this letter we more immediately address. You, beloved, may consider a *true relish* for the *sabbath*, and the work of the day, as an *evidence*, that your religion is *genuine*. It is one part of the character of God's people, that they "call the *sabbath* a delight." *Isai. lviii. 13.* This is an *evidence* of a begun *meetness*, for the eternal *sabbath* on high. Do you then love the day? Do you love the work of the day? Do you love the assemblies of Zion? Do you love it as an *holy day*? Is it in your heart to keep it *holy* unto the Lord? Do you lament the imperfections attending you in *sanctifying* it? Do you love the very prospect of an *endless sabbath*, where all shall be, *holiness to the Lord*? Then take encouragement. Cheer up. At the close of every *sabbath*, look forward to that beyond the bounds of time; to that above the ruinable skies.

We may add, the *degree* of that relish you have for the *sabbath*, may be considered as a *rule* by which you may measure the *state* of religion in your souls. Is it in a lively, or languishing situation? Is it advancing or declining? Is there not only a *true*, but a *warm* relish for God's day? Does the fire of love increase? Thus try and examine the *state* of religion in your own hearts.

Finally, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation once more. Remember, that though a due attention to the *Lord's-day*, or *christian sabbath*, is an article of great importance, yet the *manner* in which you spend the *other six*, is not a matter of indifference. Let your conduct in the world be consistent with that in the house of God. Give no occasion to any in the week, to reproach you with hypocrisy on the *sabbath*. Rather, let it appear, seeing the *Lord's-day* is the first in the week, that through the whole, your practice is under the influence of what you then professed.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to *do* his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Signed on the behalf of the brethren, by

JOHN SUTCLIFF, Moderator.

BREVIATES.

B R E V I A T E S.

The ministers and messengers met in the place of worship, soon after six o'clock. Brother Sutcliff was chosen moderator. Brother Ryland, jun. began in prayer. Then the letters from the respective churches were read, and minutes taken. After singing, brother Paine concluded with prayer.

Met for prayer at six o'clock on Wednesday morning. Our brethren Salmon, Thomas Edmonds, Burton, Prowit, Fletcher, and James, engaged. In the middle of the service, several letters, which did not arrive in sufficient time the preceding evening, were read.

At ten o'clock, the public worship of the day began. Brother Greenwood prayed. Brother Hall gave a short account of the nature and design of the association, and prayed. Brother Fuller preached from Eph. ii. 5. *By grace ye are saved.* Brother Mills prayed. Brother Hopper preached from Psal. cii. 16. *When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.* Brother Gill concluded with prayer.

Public worship again at six o'clock. Brother West prayed. Brother Sutcliff preached from Gal. iii. 19. *Wherefore then serveth the law?* Brother John Edmonds closed the public exercises of the day in prayer.

Thursday morning, met at eight o'clock. Brother Fuller prayed. Some time was spent in relating our experiences, both as christians and ministers, the last year. Brother Morris closed in prayer. Afterwards the circular letter was read; the concerns of the association fund settled, &c. About one o'clock the moderator closed the association with prayer.

Added	{ Upon a profession of faith	-	-	72
	{ By letters of recommendation	-	-	4
	{ Restored after exclusion	-	-	7
				<hr/> 83
Diminished	{ By death	-	-	20
	{ Dismission to other churches	-	-	5
	{ Exclusion	-	-	6
				<hr/> 31
Increased				<hr/> 52

Letters were received from the church at *Codnor*, in *Derbyshire*, and at *Guisborough*, in *Northamptonshire*, requesting admission into the association, which was cheerfully granted. The only alteration in their numbers in the past year, was by the addition of 10 members, viz. 9 to *Codnor*, and 1 to *Guisborough*, which are not included in the above account.

N. B. Our brother *David Evans*, pastor of the church at *Thorn*, informed us that the church under his care would have proposed to enter into our associate connection, had they not misconceived that an objection would arise from their situation, which will not admit of their having the annual meeting of the association held at their place. He was desired to inform the church, that several of the associate churches are in the same predicament, and that we shall be very ready to receive them, notwithstanding that circumstance.

* * Next association to be at *Leicester*, in the *Whitsun-week*; to meet on *Tuesday evening*, as usual. Brother *Mills*, and brother *Gill* to preach: in case of failure, brother *Hall*, and brother *Ryland, jun.*

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